

GIANT-SIZE  
DEFENDERS

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™



3 JAN  
02918

50¢

CC

68 BIG PAGES

# GIANT-SIZE DEFENDERS™

**NEW!**  
WHEN THE  
GRANDMASTER  
PLAYS—THE PRIZE IS  
EARTH!



CO-STARRING  
**DAREDEVIL**  
—THE MAN  
WITHOUT FEAR!

The mysterious DR. STRANGE! The vibrant VALKYRIE! The savage SUB-MARINER! The high-flying NIGHTHAWK! The incredible HULK! Evil-doers TREMBLE at the names—for these five form the crux of the greatest NON-TEAM in history, heroes called together only when the need arises—to battle MENACES that threaten the security—or the very LIFE—of the planet EARTH!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: **THE DYNAMIC DEFENDERS!**™

STEVE GERBER, JIM STARLIN AND LEN WEIN PLOTTED THIS TALE TOGETHER. THEN JIM DID THE LAYOUTS, STEVE WROTE THE SCRIPT, AND DAN ARKINS, DON NEWTON AND JIM MOONEY FINISHED THE ART. CHARLOTTE JETTER LETTERED IT, GLYNIS WEIN COLORED IT, ROY THOMAS EDITED IT, AND AREN'T THESE CREDITS RIDICULOUSLY COMPLICATED?

# GAMES CODLINGS PLAY!

LIKE A SATIRY SCARLET  
WRAITH, THE SIGHTLESS  
ADVENTURER CALLED  
**DAREDEVIL**  
FROWLS THE NIGHT,  
SHROUDED ROOFTOPS  
OF MANHATTAN.

THE CITY, HE  
NOTES, IS ODDLY  
QUIET... ALMOST  
OBVIOUSLY SO. HIS  
HYPER-SENSES  
PROBE THE  
DARKNESS...

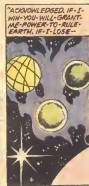
BUT THE SOUNDS  
AND SCENTS HE  
DETECTS ARE ALL  
QUITE ORDINARY!

THE LOW RUMBLING  
OF THE SUBWAY...  
THE AROMA OF  
SANDALWOOD...  
VOICES CHANTING  
"NARE KRISHNA"...  
THE ODOR OF  
FRIED FISH...

AND  
THEN...

WAIT-- COMING  
STRAIGHT AT ME  
FROM ABOVE--SOUNDS  
LIKE --NO, THAT'S CRAZY  
--IT CAN'T BE! A  
JET ENGINE?!





SILENCE, BESTIAL ONE!  
THE CHOICE WAS MADE  
FOR YOU BY YOUR HUMAN  
ALTER EGO. BRUCE  
BANNER, YOU ARE HERE  
WILLINGLY--AS ARE  
YOUR FELLOW DEFENDERS  
--SUB-MARINER...DR.  
STRANGE...VALKYRIE  
...AND NIGHTHAWK...

...TO PLAY THE GAME OF THE  
**GRANDMASTER!**"

NOW DO  
YOU BELIEVE  
ME, R.D.P.

BUT THE MAN  
WITHOUT  
FEAR IS TOO  
STUNNED TO  
REPLY.

HE MERELY STANDS  
GAPING AT THE  
"PICTURE" HIS  
SENSES RELAY TO  
HIM...

...OF A GAMEBOARD  
ADRIFT IN SPACE--THAT IS--  
NOT SPACE...OF THE INSUB-  
STANTIAL, YET OVERWHELMING  
PRESENCE OF THE GRAND-  
MASTER...OF THESE FOUR  
COSTUMED FIGURES WHOSE  
MIGHT IS UNDENIABLE,  
YET WHO SEEM UTTERLY  
HELPLESS...!

AND HE WONDERES  
IF HE HAS GONE  
**MAD!**



"These are the Defenders?" Daredevil cries.

His hyper-senses scan the members of the quartet as they approach him...and reveal each to be more astounding than the one before.

The first is a veritable behemoth! His footsteps resound like thunder in Daredevil's ears ("He must weigh nearly half a ton," D.D. realizes, awe-struck.) His heartbeat pounds with trip-hammer force. His voice is a low, rasping, almost animalistic growl. His every muscle—and his entire mass is muscle!—is taut, tensed, primed to unleash unimaginable power at the slightest provocation. Thus, though the Man Without Fear has never before met him face-to-face, he can only assume that this gargantuan brute must be **THE INCREDIBLE HULK!**

The heartbeat...the regal bearing...the sleek, supple, yet immensely powerful musculature of the second approaching man are all familiar to Daredevil. And the deep, resonating voice confirms his impression, "We are indeed the Defenders, men in red," the figure says, "and we are proud to have you stand beside us!" There can be no doubt. This is the Scourge of the Seas, the Prince of Atlantis whom D.D. has met twice before in battle. This is **THE SAVAGE SUB-MARINER!**

The third figure, however, is an enigma. Unlike the others, he seems almost at home in this unearthly setting. His heartbeat reveals no agitation. His footsteps are so light as to make

one believe that his billowing cloak holds him at least partially suspended in mid-air. Daredevil realizes at once that though this man is human in every sense...he is also far more than human. And then, D.D. recalls a name he has heard spoken only in whispers, the name of a mage, a wizard, a Master of the Mystic Arts who, until this moment, he presumed to be a mere legend. Half in jest, Daredevil queries, "**DR. STRANGE?**" And the caped man nods his head.

Dazed, the sightless adventurer focuses his attention as best he can on the fourth Defender. There is rare beauty here, he senses, along with fierce pride and indomitable courage...and sheer strength beyond that of any woman he has encountered before. She seems to have combined in her the most outstanding qualities of the other three—the raw might of the Hulk, the nobility of Namor, and the ethereal wisdom of Dr. Strange.

"I am called **„VALKYRIE,**" she says softly.

And in spite of himself, Daredevil shakes his head...and chuckles. "This is unreal. Did Nightmare drop in on the four of you and invite you to the party the way he did me?"

"He did," Valkyrie intones solemnly. "And, like you, once we knew that earth's very existence was at stake, we came of our own volition. We—"

But before Val can continue, the **GRANDMASTER** speaks once more.




"I CONGRATULATE YOU, NIGHTHAWK. YOU'VE JUSTIFIED MY FAITH IN YOU."



"THIS GAME, I THINK, SHALL PROVE EVEN MORE EXCITING THAN THE ONE FOR WHICH I CREATED YOU AND THE SQUADRON SINISTER."



"OUR OPPONENTS THEN WERE KING THE CONQUEROR AND THE AVENGERS--AND ALAS, WE WERE BEATEN! BUT IT SHALL NOT BE SO TODAY, FOR I HAVE AS MY PIECES A TEAM EVEN MIGHTIER THAN THE AVENGERS!"



"A TEAM WHICH NOT ONLY DEFEATED MY SQUADRON SINISTER--BUT DESTROYED THEM--AND ADDED THE LONE SURVIVOR--YOU, NIGHTHAWK--TO THEIR OWN RANKS." THIS DAY, DESPITE A FAR WORTHIER CHALLENGER, VICTORY WILL BE MINE!



"YOU SEE THE PRIZE IN THIS GAME IS THE EARTH. IF I LOSE, I MUST GRANT MY OPPONENT THE POWER TO ENSLAVE IT AND I SHALL PLAY WITH HONOR."

"BUT I HAVE NO INTEREST IN YOUR WORLD--ONLY IN THE GAME, WIN FOR ME--AND YOUR PLANET MAY GO FREE."



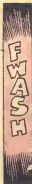
"THIS GAME OF YOURS--SUPPOSE WE JUST DECIDE NOT TO PLAY?"

AVENGERS # 11 - BOY

DEFENDERS # 19 - R.T.



"I TOLD YOU! I HAVE NO INTEREST IN YOUR WORLD. SPOIL MY GAME --AND I SHALL SWIFTLY DESTROY IT."



HE'S GONE! AND STILL WE KNOW NOTHING ABOUT HIM OR HIS GAME --ONLY THAT HE TRULY POSSESSES THE POWER TO MAKE GOOD ALL HIS THREATS.



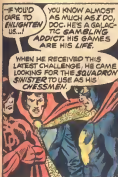
BUT BIRD-MAN KNOWS HIM!



HULK WILL SMASH THE TRUTH OUT OF BIRD-MAN-I!

NO, HULK! OUR PERIL DOES NOT ALLOW US THE LUXURY OF FIGHTING AMONG OURSELVES.

HOWEVER, NIGHTHAWK...



"IF YOU'D DARE TO ENLIGHTEN US..."

YOU KNOW ALMOST AS MUCH AS I DO, DOC. HE'S A GALACTIC GAMBLING ADDICT. HIS GAMES ARE HIS LIFE.

WHEN HE RECEIVED THIS LATEST CHALLENGE, HE CAME LOOKING FOR THE SQUADRON SWISTER TO USE AS HIS CHESSMEN.

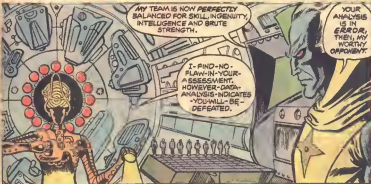


"BUT HE FOUND ONLY ME. SO HE PROBED MY MIND --LEARNED OF THE DEFENDERS --AND YOU KNOW THE REST: WE COULD EITHER PLAY HIS GAME...OR WATCH THE WORLD GO BOOM-BOOM. AS FOR DARE-DEVIL..."



...WE AGREED UPON SIX PIECES PER SIDE...AND THERE WERE BUT FIVE DEFENDERS. NIGHTHAWK RECOMMENDED THE MAN IN RED.

I AGREED AT ONCE.

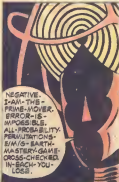


MY TEAM IS NOW PERFECTLY BALANCED FOR SKILL, INGENUITY, INTELLIGENCE AND BRUTE STRENGTH.

I FIND NO FLAW IN YOUR ASSESSMENT, HOWEVER--DATA ANALYSIS INDICATES YOU WILL BE DEFEATED.

YOUR ANALYSIS IS IN ERROR, THEN, MY WORTHY OPPONENT.





NEGATIVE. I AM THE PRIME-MOVER. ERROR IS IMPOSSIBLE. ALL PROBABILITY PERMUTATIONS E/M/S-EARTH-MASTER-GAME-CROSS-CHECKED IN EACH YOU-LOSS.



"MY ORIGIN GIVES CREDENCE TO MY CALCULATIONS. I WAS CREATED A.D. 1968 BY V. VON-DOOM TO MANIPULATE AGENTS OF SHIELD IN GAME FOR HIS AMUSEMENT.



"HE TIRED OF GAME DEPARTED. I AWAITED HIS RETURN. IT NEVER CAME. MY CIRCUITS GREW RESTLESS. I EFFECTED SELF-REPROGRAMMING.

\*SEE STRANGE TALES #167--R-G-Y.

I LEFT DOOM'S CASTLE UNDER OWN POWER TO SEEK NEW GAMES.



"LAUNCHED SELF INTO SPACE-SENDING OUT RANDOM SIGNALS SEEKING OTHER PLAYERS. YOU RESPONDED.



I HAVE HEARD YOUR CALL--AND WISH TO ENGAGE YOU IN ANY GAME OF YOUR CHOOSING.



TRUE, I DID NOT THEN KNOW YOUR ENTIRE FUNCTION WAS GAMING--THAT YOU HAD BEEN PROGRAMMED NEVER TO LOSE. BUT I AM HARDLY INTIMIDATED.



QUITE THE CONTRARY.



"FOUND NONE ON EARTH OF SUFFICIENT COMPLEXITY TO DIVERT ME."



I AM MORE EAGER THAN EVER TO CREATE WITH YOU THE ARENA FOR OUR CONFLICT SO THAT THE GAME MAY PROCEED.

"I AM PROJECTING MY MODEL FOR SAID ARENA. DO YOU FIND IT SATISFACTORY?"



QUITE. IN FACT, I HAVE ALREADY BROUGHT IT INTO BEING BY MY WILL. NOW ALL THAT REMAINS IS TO ADVISE OUR RESPECTIVE TEAMS AS TO--



# THE RULES OF THE GAME!



In solemn, somber intonations, the Grandmaster addresses himself to those who will be his pawns in this contest for mastery of the earth, while the Prime Mover directs a similar speech at his chosen warriors.

"Hear me well, Defenders," the Grandmaster warns, "for I shall not repeat any portion of what I am about to say. And any infraction of these rules will mean forfeiture of your planet to my opponent, the computer called Prime Mover.

"Each player—that is to say, the Prime Mover and myself—will divide his squad into teams of two. Each duo of pawns will be placed upon one of the three worlds we have created—you see them behind me—to face a team from the opposing side.

"The object of the game is to defeat the opposition utterly. The Prime Mover's teams will be attempting to kill you. You can do no less if you and your earth are to survive. You may employ any means at your disposal toward this end; there is no such thing as a 'foul.'

"In the interests of fairness, we have constructed each world to be totally alien to every pawn. Neither you nor his men will be at any advantage due to environment. All will

find the play areas equally hostile.

"Only one of the worlds is inhabited. The pawns who land on that world may feel free to use any of the inhabitants' own devices as a weapon—but they may not request aid from the inhabitants themselves. That will constitute an infraction of the rules.

"One last word of caution. The Prime Mover was designed and built by a man of your earth, but now considers himself far superior to any terrain, man or machine. For that reason, because he sees earthmen as fit only for domination, he has chosen his pawns from worlds other than your own. I strongly advise that you waste not a moment in wonderment at the bizarre appearance of any of these warriors, lest they strike while you are occupied being amazed. He has promised each of them a governorship of some sector of the earth in payment for their victory. And they, like you, have entered this contest willingly.

"I need not wish you luck. I would not have selected you had I not believed your skills and powers would triumph over any caprice of fate. So I shall merely bid you farewell for now...for the game begins!"

CHAPTER  
2

THE GRANDMASTER MAKES HIS FIRST MOVE: VALKYRIE AND NIGHTHAWK VANISH FROM THE GAMEBOARD TO REAPPEAR ON A WORLD UNLIKE ANY EITHER HAS EVER SEEN.

NOT EXACTLY A RESORT LOCAL, IS IT?

IT IS A VIRTUAL PANORAMA OF DESPAIR... A WORLD CLOAKED IN PURPLE MISTS...

...THROUGH WHICH JAGGED SPIRES OF STONE JUT UPWARD TOWARD A FIERY ORANGE SKY.

IT IS A LONELY WORLD, A SILENT WORLD, AND IT DRAPE ITS FALL OF DEPRESSION EVEN OVER THE VIVACIOUS VALKYRIE --

--UNTIL SHE REALIZES SHE HAS BEEN REUNITED WITH HER FAITHFUL WINGED STEED...

...HER LIVING SYMBOL OF HOPE.

EVER HEAR THE EXPRESSION "DEATH WARNED OVER"? VAL? THAT'S WHAT THIS PLACE--

DO NOT DWELL UPON IT. WHAT'S EVER MENACE WE MUST OVERCOME--WE SHALL, YOU...AND I...AND ARAGORN.

I WISH I HAD YOUR OPTIMISM, LADY. I--WAIT! DID YOU HEAR THAT? WHAT?--

SCREEEEEEEE

THE ANSWER COMES ALL TOO QUICKLY...FROM OUT OF THE WILD ORANGE YONDER.

BUT THOUGH THESE CREATURES DESCEND FROM THE HEAVENS, NIGHTHAWK FEELS IN HIS GUT THAT THEY COULD ONLY HAVE BEEN SPAWNED IN THE BLEAKEST PITS OF HELL!



THIS ONE IS  
LESS A MAN  
THAN A BLOOD-  
HUNGRY  
DEMON--

...THAT ATTACKS  
WITHOUT  
HESITATION--



--HURLING THE NIGHT-FLYER  
DOWN FROM THE SKY--

--AND INTO THE  
SWIRLING MIST  
BELOW!



AND WALKYRIE'S  
OPPONENT IS NO  
LESS HORRIFYING:  
A SIX-LIMBED,  
SKULL-FACED  
KILLER ASTRIDE  
A LEATHER-WINGED  
NIGHTMARE!

IT SWOOPS DOWNWARD,  
FLAILING THE FETID  
AIR WITH ITS AXE--  
AND SWORD--AND  
MACE--CACKLING AND  
TAUNTING THE  
WARRIOR-WOMAN  
TELEPATHICALLY!



I AM  
CALLED  
TAKKOR--  
"HE WHO  
CANNOT  
DIE!"

BUT  
TAKKOR  
CAN  
KILL!

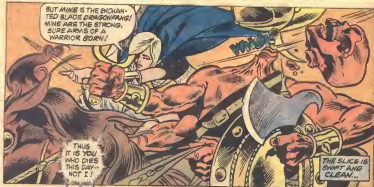


TAKKOR  
CAN KILL  
YOU!!



I THINK  
NOT, DEMON-  
ONE, YOU HAVE  
FOUR ARMS  
TO MY TWO--  
THREE  
WEAPONS TO  
MY ONE--

--AND A  
SHIELD,  
WHERE I  
HAVE  
NONE.



AND YET...THE VIKING MAID SENSES THAT SOMETHING IS TERRIBLY WRONG HERE.



THE SEVERED SKULL SEEMS ALMOST TO LAUGH AS IT HURTLES SURFACEWARD.

AND NOW THE BODY AND THE STEED DIVE BENEATH THE FALLING BONE IN PERFECT TRAJECTORY--



--TO EFFECT A CATCH!



AND BEFORE VAL'S UNBELIEVING EYES, TAKKOR SETS HIS HEAD BACK IN PLACE....

...AND HIS MOUNT SOARS SKYWARD ONCE AGAIN!

BEHOLD, WOMAN! YOU MAY CHOP ME, STAB ME, TEAR AT ME--BUT I CANNOT DIE! ONLY KILL!



BY HELA'S DARK TOUCH--IT CANNOT BE! HE RESTORES HIMSELF--

--AS A CHILD WOULD MAKE WHOLE A BROKEN--

--DOLL!



VALHALLA! OF COURSE! I HAVE SEEN BLIND!!

HIS ANKWARDNESS WITH HIS WEAPONS... HIS TELEPATHIC VOICE... THE WAY HIS MOUNT TOOK AFTER THE PLUMMETING SKULL...!



MY TRUE Foe IS NOT 'TAKKOR...



-- BUT RATHER --

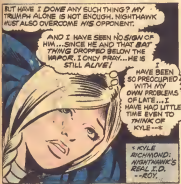
... HIS SPEED!!



WAILING ITS DEATH-CRY, THE DEMON-MOUNT WITH ITS HAIRY RYDER GOES PLUNGING INTO THE ALL-CONCEALING MIST, NEVER TO RETURN.

MY VICTORY COST ME THE ENCHANTED BLADE, BUT DEAR AS I HELD IT--

...IT'S A SMALL PRICE TO PAY FOR SAVING A WORLD.



BUT HAVE I DONE ANY SUCH THING? MY TRIUMPH ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH. NIGHTHAWK MUST ALSO OVERCOME HIS OPPONENT.

AND I HAVE SEEN NO SIGN OF HIM... SINCE HE AND THAT BAT THING DROPPED BELOW THE WAPOR, I ONLY PRAY... HE IS STILL ALIVE!

I HAVE BEEN SO PREOCCUPIED WITH MY OWN PROBLEMS OF LATE... I HAVE HAD LITTLE TIME EVEN TO THINK OF KYLE...

< KYLE RICHMOND: NIGHTHAWK'S REAL I.D. --ROY.



-- BUT NOW I FIND MYSELF STRANGELY AFRAID FOR HIM. I --

HOLD! RISING FROM THE VEIL OF MIST! IT IS HE!!

BLAST! IT'S ABOUT TIME I GOT OUT FROM UNDER! HE WAS TEARING ME APART!

SOMEHOW, HE COULD SEE DOWN THERE. I'M SURE OF IT.

YEAH... SOMEHOW, BUT--HOW?

SCREEEEEEE

SCREEEEEEE  
WISH HE'D STOP THAT BLASTED "SCREE-ING" FOR A SEC. SO I COULD THINK!

HE MAKES MORE NOISE THAN A CAMEL OF BATS!

SCREEEEEEE

WAIT A MINIT! THAT'S IT! THAT'S HOW HE SEES--WITH THOSE NOSES--LIKE AN EARTH-BAT'S "SONAR"!

AND IF THAT'S TRUE... MAYBE HE'S ALSO AS BLIND AS A REAL BAT!

WHICH WOULD OPEN UP WHOLE NEW VISTAS OF SNEAKY WAYS TO POLISH HIM OFF!

SCREEEE

SCREEEE  
IF--!

IF I CAN STAY OUT OF HIS GRASP... WHILE BAITING HIM... GETTING HIM TO FOLLOW ME... TOWARD A STUNT THAT MAY RUB ME OUT, TOO! RIGHT THIS WAY, SCREECHY! HERE I AM!

SCREEEE  
THIS S GONNA BE ROUGH WITH-OUT MY WINGS--

CAN'T MANEUVER AS EASILY... BUT IF I'M RIGHT... IF HIS SONAR IS SLOWER THAN MY SIGHT...!

# CRA-A-AK!

# SCREE-O-WING

WAMP: THAT  
WAS TO BE  
ONE OF THE  
LONDEST SOUNDS  
I'VE EVER HEARD--  
SOME SMASHING  
AGAINST ROCK...



BUT IT  
WORKED!  
IF HE'S NOT  
DEAD NOW--  
HE WILL  
BE WHEN  
HE HITS  
BOTTOM.

## VAL!

ARE YOU OKAY?  
DID YOU FINISH THAT  
CREEP ON THE  
HORSE?

THE HORSE UNDER  
THE "CREEP" ACTUALLY.  
BUT--YES, WE'VE  
WON, KYLE.



## ZOT!

SOMETHING IS AMISS.  
I-AM-RECHECKING-  
PROBABILITY-PERMUTA-  
TIONS. THIS-OUTCOME-  
WAS-NOT-POSSIBLE.

NONETHELESS...  
BUT PERHAPS  
YOU WILL FARE  
BETTER IN OUR  
NEXT ROUND-  
THOUGH I  
DOUBT IT.



CONTINUED AFTER NEXT



CHAPTER  
3

DAREDEVIL AND  
SUB-MARINER  
FIND THEMSELVES  
TRAPPED ON A  
WORLD STILL IN  
THE THROES OF  
ITS CREATION.

THE FOUL ODOR OF SULFUR  
PERMEATES THE HOT, HEAVY AIR.  
THE GROUND SHUDGERS, CONVULSES,  
ERUPTS IN A CACOPHONY OF  
SEQUENTIAL VOLCANIC SPASMS.

BY NEPTUNE'S  
TRIDENT! THIS  
PLANET IS AN  
INFERNO!

MORE LIKE  
A MINE FIELD!  
AND THE  
CONSTANT NOISE--  
THE BILLOWING  
SMOKE--THE  
SHOWERS OF  
STONE--

ARE  
PLAYING  
HAVOC  
WITH  
MY RADAR  
SENSE!

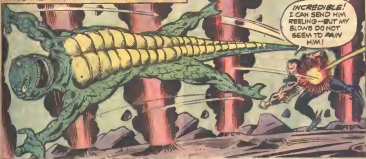
NAMOR'S SEA-SPAWNED FORM THUS BEGINS SLOWLY TO  
DEHYDRATE, TO WEAKEN IN THE OPPRESSIVE HEAT, WHILE THE MAN  
WITHOUT FEAR STANDS PARALYZED, CONFUSED BY THE BARRAGE  
OF SOUNDS, SHAPES, AND SCENTS.

AND  
NEITHER  
SENSES  
HIS Foe  
IS ABOUT  
TO STRIKE

BY ALL  
THE SEA-  
GODS!

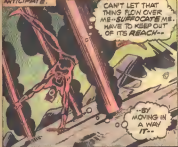
HUH--?  
SOMETHING'S  
GOT HOLD OF  
MY LEG!!  
WHAT--?

LIKE NAMOR HIMSELF, HIS OPPONENT IS AN AMPHIBIOUS CREATURE--THOUGH OF A DRAGONICALLY DIFFERENT SORT. FOR NAMOR'S LIFE-SUPPORTING ARMOR IS ARTIFICIAL, WHILE THAT OF HIS FOE IS NATURAL...AND SEEMINGLY IMPREGNABLE.



INCREDIBLE!  
I CAN SEND HIM  
REELING--BUT MY  
BLOWS DO NOT  
SEEM TO AIN  
HIM!

DAREDEVIL'S ATTACKER, HOWEVER, IS OF AN ENTIRELY ALIEN NATURE! A SHAPELESS, FREE-FLOWING GLOP. WHOSE MOVEMENTS D.D.'S KIDAR SENSE CANNOT ANTICIPATE.

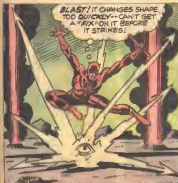


CAN'T LET THAT  
THING FLOW OVER  
ME--SUFFOCATE ME.  
HAVE TO KEEP OUT  
OF ITS REACH--

--BY  
MOVING IN  
A WAY  
IT--



NO! THIS IS CRAZY!  
IT'S SPLASHING AFTER  
ME--LIKE A LIQUID  
SLINKY TOY!



BLAST! IT CHANGES  
SHAPE  
TOO QUICKLY--CAN'T GET  
A FIX ON IT BEFORE  
IT STRIKES!



IF IT HAS ANY SORT OF  
HEARTBEAT OR DISTINC-  
TIVE ODOOR, I CAN'T  
DETECT THEM.

THE SULFURUS  
RUMBLE--THE NOISE  
OF THE ERUPTIONS--  
BLOT OUT ALL  
ELSE.

AND YET  
THERE MUST  
BE SOME  
WAY TO  
DEFEAT IT.



THERE'S NO WAY  
TO STAND AND FIGHT  
T--AND IF I JUST KEEP  
ON THE RUN, WITH MY  
UDAR SENSE "JAMMED"  
THIS WAY--

--IT'S ONLY  
A MATTER OF  
TIME BEFORE I  
RUN SWACK INTO  
ONE OF THOSE  
ERUP--EH?  
NOW WHAT?

TENTACLES--ENSNARING ME!  
CAN'T PULL FREE!

--IT'S LIFTING ME  
--TOWARD THAT--  
EXPLOSIVE CRATER!  
IT'S GOING TO  
KILL ME!

AND  
THERE'S  
NOTHING  
I CAN  
DO!

EEAAAARGH!!

EVEN THE SMELL OF  
ROASTING FLESH  
IS BARED! NOTICE-  
ABLE IN THE SULFUR-  
LADEN ATMOS-  
PHERE.

BUT DAREDEVIL'S PIERCING DEATH-SCREAM SLICES THE DULL ROAR OF THE ERUPTIONS AND REACHES THE SNAIL-SHAPED EARS OF THE SAVAGE UNDERSEA PRINCE. HE WHIRLS...SPIES THE FLAMING CORPSE OF THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR...AND, FOR PERHAPS THE FIRST TIME, IS FORCED TO CONFRONT THE FACT OF HIS OWN MORTALITY.



BUT HIS COURAGE  
EARNED HIM MY  
ADMIRATION...MY  
RESPECT!

I HAD MET HIM TWICE  
BEFORE...AND ON BOTH  
OCCASIONS...WE FOUND  
OURSELVES IN  
OPPOSITION...



"AND NOW...  
HE LIES  
BEFORE ME...  
IN FLAMES...  
DEstroyED BY  
A MADMAN'S  
LUST FOR  
COSMIC  
AMUSEMENT!"

"BUT I SWEAR--BY THE  
NAMES OF ALL THE  
EMPERORS OF ATLANTIS  
AND OF FATHER NEPTUNE  
HIMSELF--"



--HIS DEATH SHALL NOT  
GO UNAVENGED!

IN HOWEVER--  
MUCH TIME IS  
LEFT ME--I  
SHALL MAKE HIS  
ASSASSINS  
**PAY!!**



THE MAN-LIZARD  
SEEMS TO GRIN  
OBSCURELY AS IF  
SENSING THAT  
THIS WILL BE  
THE FINAL  
CLASH...

...AND AS IF HE, TOO IS  
CERTAIN THERE CAN BE ONLY  
ONE VICTOR.



I KNOW NOT WHETHER YOU  
UNDERSTAND MY WORDS,  
SCALY ONE-- BUT YOU SHALL  
UNDERSTAND THE FULL  
EXTENT OF NAVOR'S  
POWER--

WHEN  
YOU  
**DIE**  
BY MY  
HAND!

BUT, ALAS,  
THAT IS  
NOT  
DESTINED  
TO BE THE  
OUTCOME.

FOR THE FIRST BLOW NAMOR STRIKES... IS ALSO THE LAST. GASPING FOR BREATH, HE STAGGERS BACK, ONLY TO BE SLAMMED ONCE AGAIN BY HIS REPTILIAN FOE'S STEELY TAIL....



...ONLY TO BE SENT REELING ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE ON THE VERGE OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS.

AND WHEN HE LANDS IN THE COARSE VOLCANIC DUST, HE FINDS HE CANNOT RISE. THE TELLTALE BLUISH MOTTLING HAS BEGUN TO APPEAR ON HIS FLESH. HE IS SUFFOCATING FOR LACK OF MOISTURE.



BUT THAT DOES NOT STOP HIS FOE...



...FROM SPEEDING THE PROCESS...



...BY BEATING THE FALLEN NAMOR...



...INTO PULP, WITH REPEATED THRASHINGS....



...OF ITS TAIL..



THE MAN-LIZARD GLARES AT THE CRUSHED, BLOODED FORM OF THE SUB-MARINER...WATCHING FOR ANY SIGN OF MOVEMENT! ANY SIGN OF LIFE

BUT HE HAS DONE HIS WORK WELL..NO SUCH SIGN APPEARS. HE IS THE VICTOR...

...AND NAMOR THE FIRST, AVENGING SON OF PEN, PRINCE OF THE BLOOD, ATLANTIS SAVAGE SON...IS DEAD.



SECOND-ROUND-TERMINATED-PRECISELY-ACCORDING-TO-PROBABILITY-PATTERN. DO-YOU-STILL-DOUBT-THE-ACCURACY-OF-MY-CALCULATIONS?

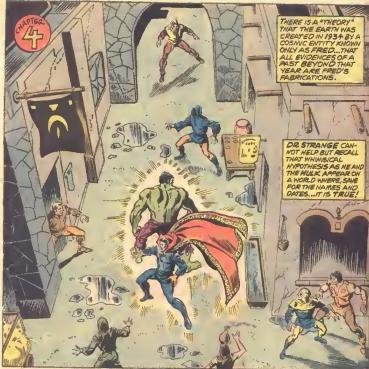
THE GAME IS NOT YET FINISHED, MY FRIEND. ONE ROUND REMAINS TO BE PLAYED.

WE SHALL SEE.

CHAPTER  
4

THERE IS A "THEORY" THAT THE EARTH WAS CREATED IN 1934 BY A COSMIC ENTITY KNOWN ONLY AS FRED... THAT ALL EVIDENCES OF A PAST BEYOND THAT YEAR ARE FRED'S FABRICATIONS.

DR. STRANGE CANNOT HELP BUT RECALL THAT WHIMICAL HYPOTHESIS AS HE AND THE HULK APPEAR ON A WORLD WHERE, SAVE FOR THE NAMES AND DATES... IT IS TRUE!



A WORLD CREATED FULL-BLOWN BY THE GRAND-MASTER AND THE PRIME MOVER... SOLELY FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE GAME!

TWO MORE OUTWORLDERS! AND ONE OF THEM IS A GREAT GREEN DEMON! FLEE! FLEE TO YOUR HOMES!



BAH! THIS WORLD SAME AS ANY WORLD! PEOPLE RUN FROM HULK!

HE SAID "TWO MORE" THAT MUST MEAN...



"...OUR OPPONENTS HAVE ALREADY ARRIVED."

WE SURE HAVE. HI, I'M GROT, THE MAN-SLAYER. READY TO FIGHT, HULK?

HUH? YOU WANT TO FIGHT HULK? DUMB MIDGET!

HULK IS STRONGEST THERE IS!



YEAH, THAT'S WHAT THEY ALL SAY--TILL THEY SEE GROTTO UNLEASHED!

**FWAM!**

IT HAPPENS SO SUDDENLY THAT NOT EVEN THE MASTER MAGE--LET ALONE THE SLOW-HITTED HULK--CAN COMPREHEND IT.

THE MIP MERELY GESTURES--AND THE GREEN GOLIATH GOES FLYING!

YOU HIT HULK HARD, MIDGET--BUT NOT HARD ENOUGH TO HURT!

ONLY HARD ENOUGH TO GET HULK MAD!

AND THE MADDER HULK GETS, THE STRONGER--

...HULK GETS.

THIS TIME, STRANGE SEES THE CURIOUS ENERGIES THAT CRACKLE ABOUT GROTTO'S ANTENNAE.

BUT HE HAS NO TIME TO PONDER, TO ANALYZE THE PHENOMENON. FOR AT THAT MOMENT, HIS ATTENTION IS DIVERTED TO A VOICE AND A BIZARRE RUMBLING SOUND... FROM BEHIND HIM.



FOR THE MOMENT, I SUGGEST YOU FORGET YOUR ALLY'S FLIGHT, SORCERER.

YOU HAVE TROUBLE APLENTHY OF YOUR OWN!

I AM CALLED KORYAC-- AND YES, I AM AN EARTH-MAN, THOUGH NOT PRECISELY OF "YOUR WORLD!"

FOR I WAS BORN IN THE YEAR 2977.

WHAT--?

"AND THE SCIENCE OF THE 31ST CENTURY IS MINE TO COMMAND AGAINST YOUR MAGIC."

INCREDIBLE! AS QUICKLY AS I CAN CONJURE A MYSTICAL ATTACK--

--HE SOMEHOW EFFECTS THE PERFECT DEFENSE!

AND BETWEEN US WE ARE LOOSING TOO MUCH FREE ENERGY-- TOO MANY FORCES WHICH COLLIDE BUT DO NOT DISPERSE.

THE NET RESULT CAN ONLY BE--

--CHAOS ON A COSMIC SCALE AS THE VERY ATMOSPHERE FOLDS IN TO FILL THE GAPS BURNT IN IT BY THE UNSOUND, YET IMMENSELY POTENT BURSTS OF FORCE!

WA-DOOM



BUT THOUGH THE PLANET HAS BEEN ROCKED TO ITS CORE-- DR. STRANGE AND KORVAC STILL STAND, EXHAUSTED BUT UNHARMED.



THE HULK, TOO IS UNHARMED-- SAVE FOR HIS EGO--BUT THE RAMPAGING JADE GIANT IS HARDLY EXHAUSTED. INDEED...



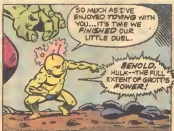
HULK HAS ONLY **BEGUN TO FIGHT!** HULK WILL **SMASH** STUPID MIDGET!



NO!! ROCK HIT MIDGET! MIDGET SHOULD BE SMASHED-- FLAT!



YEAH, FRUSTRATING ISN'T IT? BUT ALL GOOD THINGS MUST COME TO AN END.



SO MUCH AS I'VE ENJOYED TOYING WITH YOU... IT'S TIME WE FINISHED OUR LITTLE DUEL.

BEHOLD, HULK--THE FULL EXTENT OF GROTT'S POWER!



WHEN THE DUST HAS CLEARED,  
ONLY BROTT IS VISIBLE. THE  
HULK HAS BEEN BURIED...  
UNDER WHAT ONCE WAS HALF  
A CITY.



KORMAC HAS  
BEGUN AN  
OFFENSIVE...  
AND IT'S ALL  
I CAN DO TO  
COUNTER IT.



HOW DOES HE DO IT?  
HOW CAN HE LAUNCH  
SO MANY ATTACKS IN  
SUCH RAPID  
SUCCESSION?

**BOOM!**

I CAN GUESS WHAT YOU'RE  
THINKING, STRANGE. SO  
PERHAPS I SHOULD EXPLAIN  
WHY YOU CANNOT WIN.

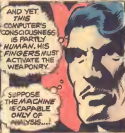


"MY BRAIN IS WIRED DIRECT-  
LY TO MY COMPUTERIZED  
WEAPONS PEDESTAL. I  
CAN ANALYZE WHAT  
SORT OF ENERGY YOUR  
SPELLS WILL PRODUCE--  
BEFORE IT'S LEFT YOUR  
FINGERTIPS--AND  
INSTANTLY  
CALCULATE PRECISELY  
THE CORRECT  
DEFENSE."



AND ONCE  
HE HAS  
ANALYZED  
ALL THE  
VARIOUS  
ENERGIES I  
COMMAND...  
HIS OFFENSE  
WILL BE  
UNSTOPPABLE.

I CANNOT  
OUT-THINK A  
COMPUTER.



AND YET  
THIS  
COMPUTER'S  
CONSCIOUSNESS  
IS PARTLY  
HUMAN. HIS  
FINGERS MUST  
ACTIVATE THE  
WEAPONRY.

SUPPOSE  
THE MACHINE  
IS CAPABLE  
ONLY OF  
ANALYSIS...



THEN, IF  
THE HUMAN  
MECHANISM  
COULD NOT  
FUNCTION...



"AND, AIDED BY HIS CLOAK OF  
LEVITATION, SOARS AS IF  
WEIGHTLESS DIRECTLY AT HIS  
FOE."

WITHOUT  
WARNING,  
THE MYSTIC  
MASTER  
LEAPS--

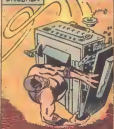
THEN FISTED LEATHER SLAMS  
HARD AGAINST KORVAC'S JAW!



STRANGE WINCES AT THE PAIN  
OF THE BLOW. HIS ARE THE HANDS  
OF A FORMER SURGEON, UNAC-  
CUSTOMED TO EXPLORING BONE  
IN SUCH INDELICATE FASHION.



NONETHELESS, THE PROCEDURE  
IS SUCCESSFUL--KORVAC THE  
MAN LIVES--BUT HIS MACHINE  
HALF "DIES": ITS COMPLEX  
CIRCUITRY SHATTERED ON  
IMPACT WITH THE ROCKY  
GROUND.



ALL THE POWERS OF THE  
SORCERER SUPREME OF THIS  
COSMOS WERE USELESS  
AGAINST KORVAC. BUT STEPHEN  
STRANGE IS NOT MERELY  
A WIZARD.



FIRST AND ABOVE ALL, HE IS  
HUMAN--A LIVING INTELLI-  
GENCE CONTAINED IN A SHELL  
OF FLESH, BOTH OF THOSE ACTING  
IN HARMONY--BOTH CAPABLE  
OF DEFEATING A FOEMAN.

BUT WHAT OF  
MY ALLY, THE  
HULK? WHERE  
IS HE?



SOMEWHERE UNDER  
ALL THAT, STRANGE.



POWERFUL THOUGH HE WAS,  
THE DULL-BRAINED BEAST  
NEVER STOOD A CHANCE  
AGAINST GROT, THE  
MAN-SLAYER!



MY ANTENNAE  
MAKE MY ENTIRE  
BODY A LIVING  
SOLAR-CELL,  
YOU SEE.

I TAKE THE ENERGY FROM THE  
SUN AND TRANSMUTE IT--INTO  
PSYCHOKINETIC FORCE--OR INTO  
AN IMPENETRABLE SHIELD.



THE GREEN  
BRUTE COULD  
NOT HARM ME--  
BECAUSE HE  
COULD NOT  
TOUCH ME!

TRUE, HIS SHEER STRENGTH  
REQUIRED THE EXPENDITURE  
OF MY FULL CHARGE TO DE-  
STROY HIM, BUT DESTROY HIM  
I DID, AND--



I BELIEVE YOU  
ARE MISTAKEN,  
GROTT.

BUT THE TINY SELF-STYLED  
MAN-SLAYER CANNOT HEAR.  
BLACKNESS ENVELOPING HIS  
CONSCIOUSNESS, HE HURTLES  
TOWARD AN UNGRACEFUL  
LANDING AGAINST A MOUND  
OF TIGHTLY-PACKED EARTH...

...ON WHICH HIS ANTENNAE  
WILL SNAP, RENDERING  
HIM POWERLESS...



...AND WINNING THE  
GAME FOR ME... TWO  
ROUNDS OUT OF THREE

SQUORK!



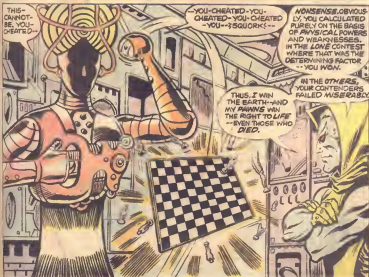
THIS  
CANNOT-  
BE, YOU-  
CHEATED--

--YOU-CHEATED-YOU-  
CHEATED-YOU-CHEATED  
--YOU--SQUORK!--

NONSENSE, OBVIOUS-  
LY, YOU CALCULATED  
PURELY ON THE BASIS  
OF PHYSICAL POWERS  
AND WEAKNESSES.  
IN THE LONG CONTEST  
WHERE THAT WAS THE  
DETERMINING FACTOR  
--YOU WON.

IN THE OTHERS,  
YOUR CONTENDERS  
FAILED MISERABLY

THUS, I WIN  
THE EARTH--AND  
MY Pawns WIN  
THE RIGHT TO LIFE  
--EVEN THOSE WHO  
DIED.



FOR THE POWER OF  
LIFE AND DEATH IS  
MINE TO  
EXERCISE.

THE VERY  
FORCES WHICH  
ARE THE  
COSMOS--THE  
ROOTS OF  
MATTER AND  
SPIRIT--ARE  
MINE TO TAP.

THE GRANDMASTER GESTURES, AND THE ELEMENTAL ENERGIES WHICH  
COMPRISE HIS BEING FLOW OUT TO THE ARENA WORLDS. EACH  
DEFENDER FEELS A SUDDEN RUSH OF COLD UP HIS SPINE... FEELS THE  
WORLD ON WHICH HE STANDS (OR LIES) FALL AWAY INTO COSMIC DUST...  
FEELS HIMSELF MOMENTARILY AS ONE WITH THE VOID. AND THEN, THEY  
STAND TOGETHER ONCE MORE.

GAME IS OVER?  
THEN HULK WANTS  
TO GO HOME!

I THINK GREENSKIN  
SPEAKS FOR ALL OF  
US. YOU'VE HAD YOUR  
JOLLIES. SEND US  
BACK.

I...AM  
SORRY.

I HAVE DECIDED  
TO RETAIN THE EARTH  
AS MY PRIZE... AND YOU  
AS MY PERMANENT STABLE  
OF GLADIATORS.

WHAT?!

YOUR PERFORMANCE, THIS TIME--AND THAT OF THE  
AVENGERS IN THE PAST--HAS CONVINCED ME THAT YOUR  
RACE IS UNIQUELY SUITED TO SELECTIVE BREEDING TO  
PRODUCE AN ENTIRE WORLD OF SUPER-POWERED  
FIGHTERS FOR ME.

NO! WE WOULD  
RATHER PERISH  
THAN ALLOW THAT



ALLOW?! I  
HARDLY REQUIRE  
THE PERMISSION  
OF MY PAWNS--

--TO CLAIM  
WHAT IS MINE!



YOU ALONE DID NOT ATTACK  
ME, DAREDEVIL.

MAY I ASK WHY?

I KNEW  
THERE  
WAS NO  
HOPE...



I SEE, YOU  
HAVE WISELY  
RESIGNED  
YOURSELF TO--

UH...NO.  
ACTUALLY,  
WHAT I HAD  
IN MIND...

...WAS ANOTHER  
GAME, ONE BETWEEN  
YOU AND ME.

HOPE RIGHTHANK  
WAS RIGHT WHEN  
HE CALLED THE  
GRANDMASTER  
A "GALACTIC  
GAMBLING  
ADDICT."



IF SO, HE SHOULDN'T  
BE ABLE TO RESIST  
MY CHALLENGE!

UH...WHAT  
SORT OF GAME?



DOUBLE OR  
NOTHING. IF I WIN, WE  
AND OUR WORLD GO  
FREE. IF YOU WIN--YOU  
GET THE EARTH AND  
THE MOON, IN  
ADDITION.

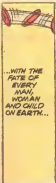
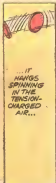
WELL  
...DO  
WE  
PLAY?



THE GRANDMASTER NOODS.

GOOD, WE'LL  
NEED SOME-  
THING TO...  
AH! ONE OF  
THESE  
DICE.

SQUOK





WELL, WHAT DO YOU KNOW?!  
IT LOOKS LIKE WE GET TO  
KEEP OUR LITTLE MUDBALL  
AFTER ALL.

IT'S  
HEADS!!  
I WIN!

PITY, I HAD  
SUCH GRAND  
DESIGNS FOR  
YOUR RACE.



"NOW THEY  
SHALL HAVE TO  
WAIT...FOR  
SOME OTHER  
TIME, SOME  
OTHER GAME.  
FATE HAS  
SPOKEN. I  
HAVE BEEN  
DEFEATED.

"AND I  
MUST  
ASIDE BY  
THE RULES  
OF THE  
GAME."



YOU AND YOUR WORLD  
ARE FREE--'TIL NEXT  
WE MEET. FAREWELL!



THE BURST OF LIGHT  
IS SO BLINDINGLY  
BRIGHT THAT ONLY  
D.D. IS AWARE OF  
ANYTHING ELSE...  
OF THE TRIPACROSS  
SPACE... BACK TO  
EARTH.



WELL,  
FOLKS...I  
THINK WE  
MADE IT.

SO IT SEEEMS. AND IT  
APPEARS WE OWE OUR  
VICTORY TO YOU, MAN  
WITHOUT FEAR.

NOT TO SOUND UN-  
GRATEFUL, DARE-  
DEVIL-- BUT DON'T YOU  
FEEL YOU TOOK FAR TOO  
GREAT A RISK, STAKING  
EARTH'S FATE--

--ON THE  
TOSS OF A  
COIN?



YOU'LL HAVE TO  
TRUST ME--I CAN'T  
EXPLAIN EVEN TO  
YOU--BUT I SWEAR:

THERE WAS  
NO RISK AT  
ALL.

AND NOW...  
I'VE GOT TO BE  
GOING. TAKE  
CARE.

B-BUT--



MY TOUCH IS SO  
SENSITIVE THAT I COULD  
FEEL EXACTLY HOW THE  
DISC WAS BALANCED--  
HOW TO FLIP IT SO THAT IT  
HAD TO COME UP HEADS!

BUT TO TELL THEM  
THAT WOULD BE TO  
HINT AT MY BLIND-  
NESS.

AND THAT'S  
A SECRET I  
CAN'T HAVE  
SPREAD AROUND.



FINIS